

Message Text

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TAGS: EAID, PFOR, VN, VS, LA, SW

SUBJECT: SWEDISH AID MINISTER MEETS WITH LAO, NORTH VIET-
NAMESE, AND PRG LEADERS

REF: STOCKHOLMS 3512; 3730; AND 3871

1. GERTRUD SIGURDSEN, MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO FOR AID MATTERS, ACCOMPANIED BY LENNART KLACKENBERG, STATE SECRETARY FOR AID, AND OTHERS, VISITED VIENTIANE FOR TWO DAYS AND HANOI FOR NINE BETWEEN MARCH 10-22. SIGURDSEN MET WITH LAO AND NORTH VIETNAMESE LEADERS AND WITH PRG MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO NGUYEN VAN HIEU IN HANOI. HIEU ASKED FOR DISASTER RELIEF AID FROM SWEDEN FOR ONE MILLION PEOPLE IN AREAS OF SOUTH VIETNAM RECENTLY TAKEN OVER BY PRG; SIGURDSEN GAVE NO COMMITMENT. ACCORDING TO LARS NORBERG, MFA CHIEF FOR ASIAN AID MATTERS, MAIN PURPOSE OF HER FIRST TRIP TO INDOCHINA WAS TO VISIT SWEDISH AID PROJECTS AND IMPROVE SIGURDSEN'S CREDENTIALS FOR RESPONDING TO CRITICISM OF 770 MILLION-KRONOR (\$197 MILLION) NORTH VIETNAM FORESTRY PROJECT ANTICIPATED TO COME FROM MODERATE PARTY DURING APRIL PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON AID POLICY.

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2. OLOV POLUHA, MFA AID OFFICER, WHO ACCOMPANIED SIGURDSEN, CONFIRMED NEWSPAPER REPOGS OF NGUYEN VAN HIEU'S APPEAL. HE SAID GOS WOULD STUDY THIS REQUEST AS IT DOES ALL SIMILAR ONES, BUT THAT, PERSONALLY, HE WOULD NOT EXPECT ANY CONTRIBUTION SWEDEN MIGHT MAKE TO BE SIGNIFICANT; MOST AVAILABLE DISASTER RELIEF FUNDS HAVE BEEN USED TO PURCHASE WHEAT WHICH PRG CANNOT USE.

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3. PRESENT IN BANGKOK DURING PART OF LUNCHEON CONVERSATION BETWEEN SIGURDSEN AND CORRESPONDENT OF STOCKHOLM NEWSPAPER DAGENS NYHETER, POLUHA JUDGED NEWSPAPER REPORTED HER REMARKS REASONABLE ACCURATELY MARCH 23. ACCORDING TO ARTICLE, SIGURDSEN REPORTED THA BOTH NORTH VIETNAMESE LEADERS AND PRG REPRESENTATIVES HAD CLAIMED THAHPRG'S RECENT SUCCESSES WERE DUE TO LARGE POPULAR UPRISINGS IN SOUTH VIETNAM, IN PROTEST AGAINST DETERIORATED LIVING CONDITIONS THERE AND AGAINST SAIGON GOVERNMENT'S REFUSAL TO FOLLOW PARIS AGREEMENT. SIGURDSEN SAID NORTH VIETNAMESE PRIME MINISTER PHAM VAN DONG, WITH WHOM SHE MET JUT BEFORE LEAVING HANOI, EXPRESSED SURPRISE THAT TAKE-OVER HAD GONE SO QUICKLY AND EXPLAINED SUCCESSES PARTLY TO DISINTEGRATED MORALE WITHIN SAIGON ARMY.

4. APPARENTLY CAREFUL TO AVOID ENDORSHING STATEMENTS OF PRG AND NORTH VIETNAMESE LEADERS WHICH SHE REPORTED TO DAGENS XHETER, SIGURDSEN ALSO NOTED IN INTERVIEW THAT IN NORTH VIETNAM RECENT FIGHTING IS NOT CALLED AN "OFFENSIVE" BUT RATHER "POPULAR UPRISING" AND NOTHING IS SAID THERE ABOUT CONTRIBUTIONS OF NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS. SHE OBSERVED THAT HANOI LEADERS ASCRIBED FLIGHT OF PEOPLE SOUTHWARD TO THEIR FEARMF BOMBINGS WHEN ARMY HAS PASSED BEYOND THEM. IN HANOI, SHE SAID, IT IS EMPHASIZED THAT PEOPLE ARE FLEEING IN ALL DIRECTIONS, "EVEN INTO PRG AREAS" AND THAT MANY SAIGON SOLDIERS HAVE GONE OVER TO FNL.

5. ACCORDING TO DAGENS NYHETER, SIGURDSEN ACKNOWLEDGED THAT PROBLEMS HAD ARISEN IN CONNECTION QTH FORESTRY PROJECT. THE 15 SWEDISH EXPERTS NOW AT BAI BANG HAVE COMPLAINED ABOUT SHORT-AGE OF MANPOWER, SIGURDSEN SAID. SHE ADDED THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE BUREAUCRACY ALSO CREADED PROBLEMS. A SECOND STOCK-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HOLM DAILY, SVENSKA DAGBLADET, REPORTED MARCH 23 THAT NORTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT QS NOW PROMISED TO INCREASE ITS CONTRI-BUTION OF MANPOWER AND MATERIAL TO PROJECT. POLUHA CONFIRMED THIS INFORMATION, ADDED THAT PROJECT REQUIRED MORE SKILLED VIETNAMESE LABOR THAN IT WAS GETTING, AND SAID NORTH VIETNAMESE GOVERN-MENT HAD DIFFICULTY COORDINATING INTERESTS OF ITS VARIOUS MINISTERS (FORESTRY, ROJS, CONSTRUCTION, ETC.) CONCERNED IN WORK.

6. ACCORDING TO MFA PRESS RELEASE ISSUED MARCH 12, SIGURDSEN MET IN VIENTIANE WITH LAOTIAN PRIME MINISTER PRINCE SOUVANNA PHOUMA, FOREIGN MINISTER PHOUMI VONGVICHIT AND MINISTER OF PLANNING AND ECONOMY SOTH PETHRASY. SHE VISITED REFUGEE CAMP IN LAOS. SWEDEN IS NOW CONTRIBUPNG GOODS WORTH 10 MILLION KRONOR (\$2.6 MILLION) TO ASSIST IN READJUSTMENT OF LAO REFUGEES.

7. COMMENT. POLUHA EXPLAINED TRIP AS LATEST OF SERIES OF VISITS BY SIGURDSEN TO MAIN RECIPIENTS OF SWEDISH AID. MINISTER HAS ALREADY VISITED KENYA, TANZANIA, BOTSWANA AND CUBA. POLUHA SAID SIGURDSEN DID NOT VISIT PRG-CONTROLLED AJAS OF SOUTH VIETNAM.
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